

Military Vacation Deals

AIRFARES

First priority for many is simply getting home or visiting loved ones in the hospital. To that end a number of carriers have offered special discounts for servicemen and women and their families:

■ **Alaska Air** and **Horizon Air** are cutting fares by 40 percent for active and reserve military and their immediate families traveling with them. Ask for the “Thank you Fares” which will be valid for travel through Feb. 12, 2004, but must be purchased by Sept. 30 of this year. Travel must originate in the United States and requires a Saturday-night stay-over and a three-day advance purchase. To book “Thank You Fares” call Horizon at 800/547-9308 or Alaska at 800/ALASKA-AIR (800-252-7522). The airlines also have special bereavement and medical emergency fares.

■ **ATA** is offering free travel for immediate family members of wounded active military personnel. It’s extending this free service to family member who need to travel to attend funerals as well. Call 800/435-9282 and ask for ATA’s “Military Family Travel Assistance Program”.

■ **Continental Airlines** is waiving advance purchase requirements and minimum stay requirements for family of members of the US armed forces who were injured in Iraq. Call 800/468-7022 for more details.

■ **Delta Airlines** is discounting fares from the US to Germany and Puerto Rico, for those who need to visit their loved ones hospitalized overseas. Travel must be completed by June 18. Call 800/325-1212 and tell the agent you speak with to refer to page 12147 for more information.

■ **United Airlines** is offering an additional discount off it’s normal “emergency” and “bereavement” fares. The program is called the “Special Care Fare”. Call 800/864-8331 to learn more.

■ **US Airways** has put together a “Salute Savings” program for members of the military (active duty and reservists) and their immediate families. Contact a government-contracted travel agency for more information. Discounted travel is available everywhere US Airways flies, be it within the United States or to Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico or Europe. Departures must originate in the United States, with travel completed by Feb. 12, 2004 (purchase tickets by Dec. 31).

THE BIG GIVEAWAY IN TROPICAL RESORTS

Now on to the R&R, or “Operation Relax” as the company behind the offer calls it. Sandals and Beaches, those swanky chains of all-inclusive resorts, are giving away free four-night vacations, good for the next two years. Well, I should say “almost free” as military personnel will have to pay their own airfare to get to the Caribbean (the resorts are located in St. Lucia, Antigua, Jamaica, Turks and Caicos and the Bahamas). But once they’re on site, everything will be taken care of—all meals, drinks (even premium liquors), snacks, tips and all activities from waterskiing to scuba diving to golf. It’s quite an offer, especially considering the plush amenities of these two chains.

Military personnel are requested to go to the Beaches (www.beaches.com) or Sandal’s (www.sandals.com) websites on May 9 to download an application form. Completed applications must be received by Aug. 9 at the latest. The parent company of Sandals and Beaches plans to give away \$2 million worth of free vacations, with each one worth \$2000 per person (you do the math).

TORTOLA FOR TWO

Set on a mile-long swatch of powdery white sand, the Long Bay Beach and Resort is considered one of the finest on Tortola. It’s now saluting America’s finest by presenting 10 lucky couples with a free “Romance Package”. How romantic is it? Well, there’ll be oceanview accommodations, four candlelight dinners for two, champagne in room upon arrival, an island tour (or one-day car rental) and complimentary daytime tennis, nine-hole pitch-and-putt, snorkeling equipment, roundtrip airport/ferry transfers, and live ocean side entertainment. This is a first-come, first-served giveaway, so call 877/906-2525 as soon as possible. For those who don’t get one of the ten slots, Long Bay is giving those who served in the Iraq war a 50 percent discount on stays through Dec. 31, dropping the price of a room to \$77/night, including breakfast. For more info go to www.longbay.com.

TRADE THE BARRACKS FOR A HOTEL

For the entire month of May, most Knights Inn and Villager Inns will drop their rates to a flat \$28/night for all active and retired members of the US military. Military personnel can book stays by calling either chain's toll-free reservations line and using code "LSGM". Stays at Knights Inn hotels can be booked by calling (800) 843-5644 and stays at Villager locations can be booked by calling (800) 328-7829.

Those visiting the Big Apple will get a break at Hotel Thirty Thirty (please click [here](#) to read our review of this property). Thirty Thirty is giving twenty, twenty percent that is, in discounts for the troops. Go to www.3030nyc.com or call 800-497-6028.

The Four Points LAX, located near several military bases, is lowering its rates to \$59/night for military dependents. That rate drops to \$49/night for weeklong stays. Go to www.fourpointslax.com for details.

A SALUTE FROM SIN CITY

Over sixty of Vegas' top hotels have joined together in a promotion called "Operation Welcome Home" which will net military personnel a 20 percent discount at any of the participating properties (the Aladdin, the Luxor, Excalibur, Paris Las Vegas, Stratosphere, Terribles and many others). Along with discounts on rooms, there should be some savings on dining, shopping and entertainment. Before jumping at the 20 percent, however, we'd suggest shopping around, as one often sees deeper discounts with such companies as Expedia, Hotels.com and Quikbook. For more info, go to www.vegasfreedom.com (click on the "Great deals" section) or call 877/VISITLV.

A FREE RIDE AT THE THEME PARKS

Anheuser-Busch is not just a brew-meister. It owns five of the most popular theme parks in the US: SeaWorld San Antonio, SeaWorld Orlando, SeaWorld San Diego, Busch Gardens and Sesame Place. For the upcoming months, it will be waiving the entrance fees to all five for all active duty military and reservists, US Coast guard, National guardsmen and their dependants for visits between Memorial Day and Veterans Day (Nov. 11). To learn more go to www.anheuserbusch.com.

CRUISE NEWS

The savings don't end on land. We've heard from the folks at Cruises Only (www.cruisesonly.com) that Norwegian Cruise Lines is marking down for the military as well. Some of the discounted sailings include a 14-night "Exotic Caribbean" itinerary aboard the Norwegian Dawn for just \$399, and seven night New York-Bermuda voyages (aboard the Norwegian Sea) also for \$399. Contact Cruises Only or your favorite cruise agency for more information.

SOUTH OF THE BORDER STAYS

A company called Real Resorts, which owns almost a dozen properties on the Mayan Riviera, will be discounting rates by 50 percent at three of its properties: The Gran Porto Real Resort and Spa in Playa del Carmen, the Gran Caribe Real Resort and Spa in Cancun and the Costa Real Hotel and Suites. With the discount, all inclusive rates will start at \$80/person, per night from now through May 20, from May 28 through July 1 and from Aug. 20 through Dec. 20. Call 800/543-7556 or go to www.realresorts.com.mx for more information on the "Red, White and Blue" rates. The offer is open to active duty military and reservists, US Coast Guard and National Guardsmen.

In addition, the town of Puerto Vallarta has gone on a discounting spree, gifting US military at a number of properties including the Hotel Rosita and El Pescador. Both are located in the heart of Puerto Vallarta, adjacent to the oceanside walkway in the center of the city. Hotel Rosita offers a special military offer of \$50, or \$58 at the El Pescador, both with daily breakfasts (call 877/813-6712) for travel through Dec. 21. Until Dec. 23, 2003, the Club Embarcadero Pacifico (a nautical style beach hotel in the heart of the exclusive area of Marina Vallarta) is offering special military rates at \$70 (call 011-52/322-221-1177). For more information about other participating Puerto Vallarta properties, or for general PV info, call your 888/384-6822, or log on to www.visitpuertovallarta.com.

MUSEUM ADMISSIONS

■**Intrepid Sea Air Space Museum, NYC:** It may feel like a bit of a “busman’s holiday” but for Fleet Week this year (May 21-27), military personnel on active duty will be allowed to tour the USS Intrepid absolutely free. Many will take part in arm wrestling and tug of war competitions. The museums site is www.intrepidmuseum.org

■**Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA:** A chance to journey back to the early 19th century, with a visit to this historically accurate, recreated village set on 200 acres of land. Military personnel receive a 20 percent discount on admission, children under 6 are free. Go to www.osv.org or call 800/SEE-1830 for directions and additional information.

■**Battleship Cove, Fall River, MA:** The largest collection of historic naval ships in the US is on display here, so it’s only natural they’re welcoming back current day sailors (and soldiers and marines) with a 50 percent-plus discount on admission. Military will pay \$4.50 (as opposed to \$10) to enter, but if they wear their uniforms, they get in free. Learn more at www.battleshipcove.org.

■**Mead Art Museum, Amherst, MA:** Free admission and a gift (either a key chain, postcards or a flashlight keychain) with military ID. The museum is affiliated with Amherst College and has an unusually fine collection of American paintings. Go to www.amherst.edu/mead.

CAPE COD CAMPING

Our final offer comes from Peter Pond Park, a campground in Sandwich, MA which will be cutting its rates by 50 percent for those who served in Iraq. Visit www.campepecod.com for pictures, prices and other details.